



THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON AUTISM

*“Supporting individuals with autism and their families:
forging new directions for real change”*

Overview & Summary of the Autism Commission Task Forces

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At its September 13, 2006 meeting, The Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism established the following three Task Forces: Early Identification & Intervention; Education & Professional Development; and Transitional Services & Supports. These workgroups were charged with the role of assisting the Commission in fulfilling the legislative mandate, SCR No. 51 (Perata), that “the Commission shall identify gaps in programs, services, and funding related to the early identification of autism spectrum disorders and provide recommendations to close the identified gaps.”

The three Task Forces represented a diverse and wide array of backgrounds and expertise that included parents and family members, professionals and experts working with individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD,) representatives of state and local government departments/agencies, the non-profit sector and other community based organizations. Each group was led by two Commissioners who served as Chair and Vice-Chair.

Between November 2006 and February 2007, each Task Force held three separate day-long meetings that were organized as follows:

- **Meeting 1** focused on the identification of major problems and gaps, particularly those that are amenable to state policy intervention.
- **Meeting 2** reviewed the problems and gaps identified during the first meeting and then focused on the identification of solutions, strategies, and opportunities to close the gaps
- **Meeting 3** provided an opportunity to review the findings from the first two meetings and to adopt specific recommendations to present to the commission.

The Task Forces members were asked to consider these issues:

Criticality—Why is this problem important to address? What are the implications for individuals and families, society, the state?

Barriers—What are the specific barriers that contribute to this problem? For example: Does the problem stem from the structure of existing law? Is there a gap not covered by law? Is there an implementation problem? Is there inadequate funding, training, information, coordination, accountability, etc?

State Role—What is the state’s role and responsibility to address this problem, including any legal mandates?

Service systems—What are the roles and responsibilities of entities that coordinate or provide services at the local level? Regional centers, public schools, local governments, health care providers, health care plans, non profit agencies and schools, family support organizations, child care and early childhood education providers, and other service providers

Data/Information—What information is available that describes or demonstrates this problem? Who and how many individuals are affected? What information do we wish was available? Is it possible to obtain this information quickly and how? Are there other experts and stakeholders that need to be engaged in this issue?

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Vision/Solutions—What is your vision for solving this problem? Are there any successful models to learn from? What specific changes are needed at the state level? At the local level? What is the feasibility of change? Is the idea ready for implementation? Will it require additional resources? Will it require policy development, new technology, or systems change? What are the possible strategies? Are there opportunities to leverage?

The following “rules of the road” were given to the Task Forces as they prioritized and assimilated their findings and recommendations:

1. That parents, family members, and individuals with ASD as well as other stakeholders who are working in the field believe that there is an immediate critical problem or gap to address. In addition, there may be information that demonstrates the extent and criticality of the problem.
2. The state has a clear role and responsibility to address the issue.
3. The potential solution is clearly identified and feasible to implement. Changes required to implement the solution are spelled out (i.e., need for funding, training, etc).
4. The solution to the problem is cost effective, meaning that it is the right thing to do at the right time.
5. The solution is consistent with the state’s values, role, and responsibilities.
6. The outcomes of the solutions recommended can be measured and quantified.
7. The solution has the potential for systemic change that would benefit a larger population of children with developmental needs in addition to those with autism spectrum disorders.

The Preliminary Draft Findings and Recommendations were presented by each Task Force at the meeting of the full Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism (March 1, 2007; State Capitol.)

These three reports are posted at <http://senweb03.sen.ca.gov/autism/> or can be obtained by contacting (916) 319-3541; fax (916) 319-3547.